

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for facilitating a multi party shipping transaction, such transaction involving transport by a vehicle of a load of goods from a first facility to a second facility on behalf of a party in interest, the system comprising:

a central site connected to an electronic network, the central site including a database, the database including:

- a record for a sending party;
- a record for a receiving party; and
- a record for a shipping party; and

the central site capable of:

- collecting location information regarding a load of goods;
- creating a bill of lading for the load of goods;
- making available the location information for access by at least one of said parties via the electronic network;
- making available the bill of lading for access by at least one of said parties via the electronic network; and
- collecting proof of delivery information.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the central site is capable of collecting proof of delivery information in the form of a digital signature.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the central site is capable of collecting proof of delivery information in the form of a code.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the central site is capable of collecting proof of delivery information in the form of an electronically captured handwritten signature.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive letter 'B' or similar character.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the central site includes a Web site permitting a shipping party and the first facility to have access to the bill of lading.
6. The system of claim 1 wherein the location information is generated with a GPS device.
7. The system of claim 1 wherein the central site is accessible by the first facility and said party in interest via an electronic network.
8. The system of claim 7 wherein the electronic network is the Internet.
9. A system for facilitating a multi-party shipping transaction, the system comprising:
- a centralized shipping transaction processor;
 - a set of data terminals each configured to communicate with at least the shipping transaction processor via a network; and
 - an on-board information manager arranged on a vehicle, wherein the information manager is adapted to communicate with at least the centralized shipping transaction processor throughout the course of the transaction.
10. The system of claim 9 wherein the shipping transaction processor further comprises:
- a CPU;
 - a storage device to store shipping transaction data; and
 - a communications device adapted to communicate with the data terminals.
11. The system of claim 9 wherein the shipping transaction processor is capable of collecting proof of delivery information in the form of a digital signature.



12. The system of claim 9 wherein the shipping transaction processor is capable of collecting proof of delivery information in the form of a code.

13. The system of claim 9 wherein the shipping transaction processor is capable of collecting proof of delivery information in the form of an electronically captured handwritten signature.

14. The system of claim 9 wherein the shipping transaction processor generates a bill of lading, and the bill of lading includes a Web site permitting a shipping party and the first facility to have access to the bill of lading.

15. The system of claim 9 wherein the location information is generated with a GPS device.

16. The system of claim 9 wherein the network is the Internet.

17. A method of facilitating a multi-party shipping transaction via a central site, such transaction involving transport by a vehicle of a load of goods from a first facility to a second facility on behalf of a party in interest, the method comprising:

collecting at the central site information transmitted from the vehicle describing the location of the vehicle;

permitting the first facility to have access to, via the central site, information describing the location of the vehicle;

creating an electronic bill of lading;

collecting pickup notification at the central site once the vehicle receives the load from the first facility;

collecting proof of delivery information at the central site once the vehicle delivers the load to the delivery site; and

permitting said party in interest to have access, via the central site, to information



concerning the location of the vehicle, to the status of collection of said pickup notification, and to the status of receipt of said proof of delivery information.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of collecting proof of delivery includes the collection of a digital signature.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the digital signature is a code.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the digital signature is an electronically captured handwritten signature.

21. The method of claim 17 further comprising permitting a carrier and the first facility to have access, via the central site, to the bill of lading.

22. The method of claim 17 wherein the location information is determined using a GPS device.

23. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of collecting information describing the location of the vehicle is performed periodically.

24. The method of claim 17 wherein the central site is accessible by the first facility and said party in interest via an electronic network.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the electronic network comprises the Internet.

26. A method of facilitating multi-party shipping transaction, the method comprising:
electronically generating a bill of lading, such that the bill of lading can be
accessed by the parties to the transaction;
electronically notifying a storage facility of a sending party's instruction that an



outgoing load be released from the facility for delivery;

electronically notifying a carrier that the load is available for pickup;

collecting information about the order throughout the course of the transaction;

electronically capturing the consignee's acceptance of the delivery; and

making the information about the order electronically accessible by the parties throughout course of the transaction.

27. The method of claim 26 comprising collecting proof of delivery.

28. The method of claim 26 wherein a vehicle ships the load, the method comprising:
tracking the location of the vehicle; and
making information on the location available to the parties.

29. A method of facilitating the transportation of a load of goods by a vehicle between a first facility and a second facility, the method comprising:
transmitting from said vehicle information describing the location of said vehicle for posting at a central site;
presenting said vehicle at said first facility pursuant to notification, related to the location of said vehicle, that said load of goods awaits pick-up there, such notification being the result of posting at said central site of information regarding the transportation;
after pick-up of said load of goods by said vehicle, transmitting from said vehicle information describing the location of said vehicle for posting at said central site, from which information regarding an estimated time of arrival of said vehicle at said second facility can be determined;
securing proof of delivery information, signifying delivery of said load of goods at said second facility, said proof of delivery information being in electronic form suitable for transmission to said central site for posting; and
obtaining payment for transport of said load of goods based on the proof of delivery information posted at said central site.



30. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of securing proof of delivery includes the collection of a digital signature.
31. The method of claim 30 wherein the digital signature is a code.
32. The method of claim 30 wherein the digital signature is an electronically captured handwritten signature.
33. The method of claim 29 wherein the location information is determined using a GPS device.
34. The method of claim 29 wherein said vehicle accesses the central site via a radio link and the Internet.
35. A method of facilitating the transfer of a load of goods from a first facility to a second facility, the method comprising:
 - accessing a central site presenting information concerning the location of vehicles available for transporting said load of goods;
 - transmitting to said central site information describing the transfer;
 - transmitting information resulting in the notification of one or more of said vehicles that it should pick up said load of goods at said first facility;
 - after pick-up of said load of goods by said vehicle, accessing said central site to obtain information concerning the location of said vehicle to monitor when delivery of said load of goods will occur; and
 - accessing said central site for proof of delivery information posted at said site concerning said load of goods.
36. The method of claim 35 further comprising accessing, via said central site, the bill



of lading.

37. The method of claim 35 further comprising accessing said central site via the Internet.

38. A method of facilitating the receipt at a second facility of a load of goods from a first facility, the method comprising:

accessing a central site for information concerning the location of a vehicle carrying said load of goods;

coordinating preparation to receive the load of goods at said second facility with the arrival of said vehicle as indicated by said information;

and providing proof of delivery information in electronic form for collection at said central site.

39. The method of claim 38 further comprising accessing the central site via the Internet.

